

## Discussion

It is difficult for many people to know what response to make to situations of domestic abuse. Discuss the questions below in small groups, feed back your answers, and invite a social worker or psychologist who works in the field of domestic violence to offer comment.

1. *Do you think it is ever acceptable for a husband/wife to seek to control their spouse? Why/why not? How might the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and Philippians 2:4-11 support or challenge your answers?*
  
2. *Brainstorm a list of things that people might be likely to say or do in this situation. As a group discuss what the possible consequences of each might be. If you have multiple groups discussing this, ask each group to report back and then invite your visiting domestic violence expert to offer feedback on the group responses.*
  
3. *How might an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence have informed a different response by the pastor? How can we guard against a well-intentioned desire to keep marriages intact unwittingly contribute to an ongoing cycle of violence?"*

## Close

Spend some time praying for households affected by domestic violence



# No Place for violence here.

## WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS GUIDE

Every year more than 200,000 women living in Australia are subjected to physical violence by an intimate partner – their husband, boyfriend or ex. Thousands more will have a partner who seeks to control them through emotional manipulation, verbal abuse, invoking the name of God, or restricting their access to money and people.

This study guide will help you understand the shape and nature of domestic abuse and how you and your church can respond.

**If you are experiencing abuse, please call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**

## Sandy's Story

Watch "Behind Closed Doors", a 25 minute report on domestic violence in Australia. After you have finished watching it, take time out to reflect on how you are feeling; whether you or someone you know experienced domestic violence and how it was similar or different to the experience of Sandy; and any questions it raises for you.

## Things to take from Sandy's story

### Domestic abuse is mainly perpetrated by men against women

The vast majority of victims of domestic violence are women and children, and the vast majority of perpetrators are men.

### Domestic abuse is about control

At the heart of domestic abuse is the desire of the abuser to control his partner in order to meet his own dysfunctional emotional needs. It is widely agreed amongst those working in the field that domestic violence is not an anger management problem, nor a stress management problem, nor a drug abuse problem. It is rather an intentional set of actions by which one person tries to control another.

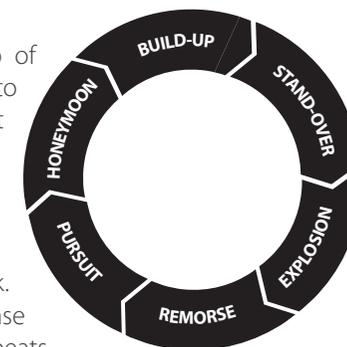
### Domestic abuse takes multiple forms

Men seek to control their partner in many ways. Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, financial, social, spiritual. "Physical violence can include pushing, shoving, hitting, punching, choking, and beating with and without a weapon; sexual violence can include rape, unwanted sexual practices, mutilation and coerced prostitution; psychological violence can include intimidation with looks or gestures, stalking or other harassment, smashing furniture, showing weapons, harming pets, threatening to harm the partner, children, pets and property; emotional abuse can include denigration, undermining, social isolation, and financial abuse can include unilateral control of money."

### Domestic abuse is often cyclical

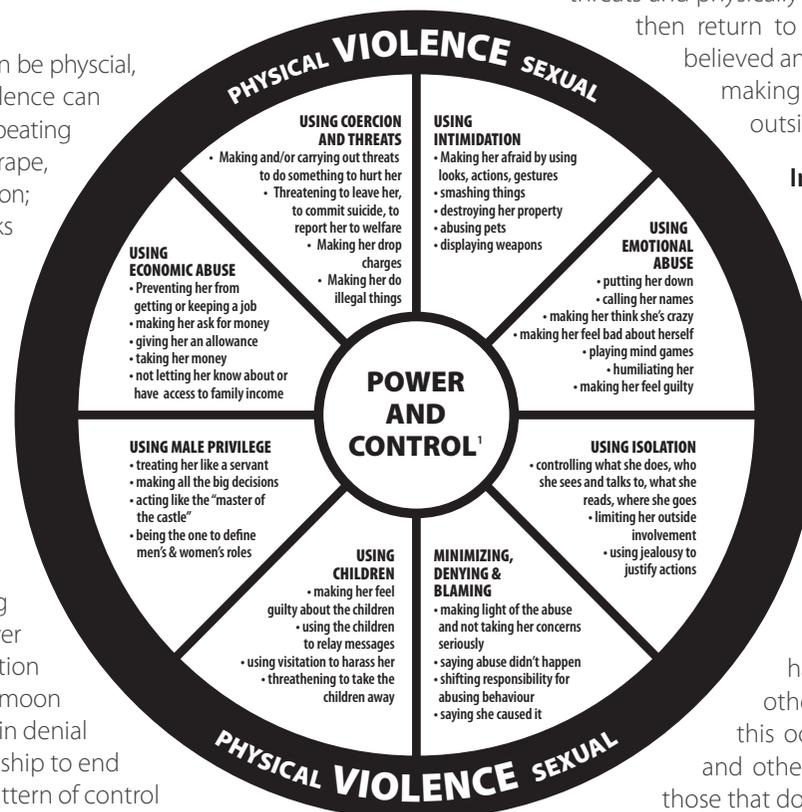
Many relationships are not marked by daily violence, but pass through a cycle described by Dr Lenore Walker. After an explosion of physical violence the perpetrator is filled with feelings of remorse and shame and seeks to justify himself. In the pursuit stage the abuser does everything he can to make up for the violence – promising to never commit violence again, purchasing gifts, lavishing attention upon the abused. The relationship can even enter a honeymoon phase in which both the abused and the abuser may be in denial as to how bad the abuse was. Neither wants the relationship to end and do not believe it will reoccur in the future. But the pattern of control

eventually reemerges and there is a build-up of verbal, emotional or financial abuse. This leads to the stand over stage in which the tension is built to the point that its release is inevitable, with the abuser becoming increasingly frightening and the abused walking on eggshells to try and prevent the explosion into violence. The explosion stage is when the violence is at its peak. The pent-up tension within the abuser finds release in acts of physical violence. The process then repeats, although as Sandy found, any number of stages may be bypassed and the relationship move straight from explosion to build-up.



### Perpetrators and victims are good at hiding

Abusive behaviour can occur for a long time in a relationship before anyone outside the household is aware of it. Survivors speak of husbands who can be screaming threats and physically hurting them, answer a phone call calmly and pleasantly, then return to beating them. Likewise, victims, terrified of not being believed and/or experiencing more violence, can be accomplished at making their household and relationship appear normal to those outside the home.



### In christian circles the bible can be used as a weapon

Christian abusers commonly quote biblical verses that call on wives to submit to their husbands to insist that their control over their wife is God-ordained and that their wife must submit to it. Similarly, it is not uncommon for pastors and Christian friends to tell abused women and children to submit to the leadership of their husband/ father, to encourage an abused women not to do anything that would end the marriage, and to be willing to suffer in the process.

### Perpetrators can stop using violence, but many never do.

The desire for control is not easily broken, nor the abusive practices that go with it. Male behaviour change programs have had some success but only when abusers stop blaming others for their violence and accept responsibility for it. When this occurs some perpetrators are able to stop using violence and other forms of coercion. Many however do not, and among those that do, many believe they could lapse back into violence.